

• A • BOOK • OF • IMAGES •



• W • T • HORTON • & • W • B • YEATS •





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THE UNICORN QUARTOS, NUMBER TWO. A
BOOK OF IMAGES. DRAWN BY WILLIAM T.
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The Publishers are asked to state that “The Brotherhood of the New Life” claims to be practical rather than visionary, and that the “waking dreams” referred to in the above passage are a purely personal matter.

A BOOK OF IMAGES
DRAWN BY W. T.
HORTON & INTRO-
DUCED BY W. B. YEATS

LONDON AT THE UNICORN
PRESS VII CECIL COURT ST.
MARTIN'S LANE MDCCCXCVIII



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INTRODUCTION.

IN England, which has made great Symbolic Art, most people dislike an art if they are told it is symbolic, for they confuse symbol and allegory. Even Johnson's Dictionary sees no great difference, for it calls a Symbol "That which comprehends in its figure a representation of something else;" and an Allegory, "A figurative discourse, in which something other is intended than is contained in the words literally taken." It is only a very modern Dictionary that calls a Symbol "The sign or representation of any moral thing by the images or properties of natural things," which, though an imperfect definition, is not unlike "The things below are as the things above" of the Emerald Tablet of Hermes! *The Faery Queen* and *The Pilgrim's Progress* have been so important in England that Allegory has overtopped Symbolism, and for a time has overwhelmed it in its own downfall. William Blake was perhaps the first modern to insist on a difference; and the other day, when I sat for my portrait to a German Symbolist in Paris, whose talk was all of his love for Symbolism and his hatred for Allegory, his definitions

were the same as William Blake's, of whom he knew nothing. William Blake has written, "Vision or imagination"—meaning symbolism by these words—"is a representation of what actually exists, really or unchangeably. Fable or Allegory is formed by the daughters of Memory." The German insisted in broken English, and with many gestures, that Symbolism said things which could not be said so perfectly in any other way, and needed but a right instinct for its understanding; while Allegory said things which could be said as well, or better, in another way, and needed a right knowledge for its understanding. The one gave dumb things voices, and bodiless things bodies; while the other read a meaning—which had never lacked its voice or its body—into something heard or seen, and loved less for the meaning than for its own sake. The only symbols he cared for were the shapes and motions of the body; ears hidden by the hair, to make one think of a mind busy with inner voices; and a head so bent that back and neck made the one curve, as in Blake's *Vision of Blood-thirstiness*, to call up an emotion of bodily strength; and he would not put even a lily, or a rose, or a poppy into a picture to express purity, or love, or sleep, because he thought such emblems were allegorical, and had their meaning by a traditional and not by a natural right. I said that the rose, and the lily, and the poppy were so married, by their colour, and their odour, and their use, to love and purity and sleep, or to other symbols of love

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and purity and sleep, and had been so long a part of the imagination of the world, that a symbolist might use them to help out his meaning without becoming an allegorist. I think I quoted the lily in the hand of the angel in Rossetti's *Annunciation*, and the lily in the jar in his *Childhood of Mary Virgin*, and thought they made the more important symbols,—the women's bodies, and the angels' bodies, and the clear morning light, take that place, in the great procession of Christian symbols, where they can alone have all their meaning and all their beauty.

It is hard to say where Allegory and Symbolism melt into one another, but it is not hard to say where either comes to its perfection ; and though one may doubt whether Allegory or Symbolism is the greater in the horns of Michael Angelo's *Moses*, one need not doubt that its symbolism has helped to awaken the modern imagination ; while Tintoretto's *Origin of the Milky Way*, which is Allegory without any Symbolism, is, apart from its fine painting, but a moment's amusement for our fancy. A hundred generations might write out what seemed the meaning of the one, and they would write different meanings, for no symbol tells all its meaning to any generation ; but when you have said, " That woman there is Juno, and the milk out of her breast is making the Milky Way," you have told the meaning of the other, and the fine painting, which has added so much unnecessary beauty, has not told it better.

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2. All Art that is not mere story-telling, or mere portraiture, is symbolic, and has the purpose of those symbolic talismans which mediæval magicians made with complex colours and forms, and bade their patients ponder over daily, and guard with holy secrecy; for it entangles, in complex colours and forms, a part of the Divine Essence. A person or a landscape that is a part of a story or a portrait, evokes but so much emotion as the story or the portrait can permit without loosening the bonds that make it a story or a portrait; but if you liberate a person or a landscape from the bonds of motives and their actions, causes and their effects, and from all bonds but the bonds of your love, it will change under your eyes, and become a symbol of an infinite emotion, a perfected emotion, a part of the Divine Essence; for we love nothing but the perfect, and our dreams make all things perfect, that we may love them. Religious and visionary people, monks and nuns, and medicine-men, and opium-eaters, see symbols in their trances; for religious and visionary thought is thought about perfection and the way to perfection; and symbols are the only things free enough from all bonds to speak of perfection.

Wagner's dramas, Keats' odes, Blake's pictures and poems, Calvert's pictures, Rossetti's pictures, Villiers de Lisle Adam's plays, and the black-and-white art of M. Herrmann, Mr. Beardsley, Mr. Ricketts, and

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Mr. Horton, the lithographs of Mr. Shannon, and the pictures of Mr. Whistler, and the plays of M. Maeterlinck, and the poetry of Verlaine, in our own day, but differ from the religious art of Giotto and his disciples in having accepted all symbolisms, the symbolism of the ancient shepherds and star-gazers, that symbolism of bodily beauty which seemed a wicked thing to Fra Angelico, the symbolism in day and night, and winter and summer, spring and autumn, once so great a part of an older religion than Christianity; and in having accepted all the Divine Intellect, its anger and its pity, its waking and its sleep, its love and its lust, for the substance of their art. A Keats or a Calvert is as much a symbolist as a Blake or a Wagner; but he is a fragmentary symbolist, for while he evokes in his persons and his landscapes an infinite emotion, a perfected emotion, a part of the Divine Essence, he does not set his symbols in the great procession as Blake would have him, "in a certain order, suited to his 'imaginative energy.'" If you paint a beautiful woman and fill her face, as Rossetti filled so many faces, with an infinite love, a perfected love, "one's eyes meet no mortal thing when they meet the light of her peaceful eyes," as Michael Angelo said of Vittoria Colonna; but one's thoughts stray to mortal things, and ask, maybe, "Has her love gone from her, or is he coming?" or "What predestinated unhappiness has made the shadow in her

eyes?" If you paint the same face, and set a winged rose or a rose of gold somewhere about her, one's thoughts are of her immortal sisters, Pity and Jealousy, and of her mother, Ancestral Beauty, and of her high kinsmen, the Holy Orders, whose swords make a continual music before her face. The systematic mystic is not the greatest of artists, because his imagination is too great to be bounded by a picture or a song, and because only imperfection in a mirror of perfection, or perfection in a mirror of imperfection, delight our frailty. There is indeed a systematic mystic in every poet or painter who, like Rossetti, delights in a traditional Symbolism, or, like Wagner, delights in a personal Symbolism; and such men often fall into trances, or have waking dreams. Their thought wanders from the woman who is Love herself, to her sisters and her forebears, and to all the great procession; and so august a beauty moves before the mind, that they forget the things which move before the eyes. William Blake, who was the chanticleer of the new dawn, has written: "If the spectator could enter into one of these images of his imagination, approaching them on the fiery chariot of his contemplative thought, if . . . he could make a friend and companion of one of these images of wonder, which always entreat him to leave mortal things (as he must know), then would he arise from the grave, then would he meet the Lord in the air, and then he would be

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happy." And again, "The world of imagination is the world of Eternity. It is the Divine bosom into which we shall all go after the death of the vegetated body. The world of imagination is infinite and eternal, whereas the world of generation or vegetation is finite and temporal. There exist in that eternal world the eternal realities of everything which we see reflected in the vegetable glass of nature."

Every visionary knows that the mind's eye soon comes to see a capricious and variable world, which the will cannot shape or change, though it can call it up and banish it again. I closed my eyes a moment ago, and a company of people in blue robes swept by me in a blinding light, and had gone before I had done more than see little roses embroidered on the hems of their robes, and confused, blossoming apple boughs somewhere beyond them, and recognised one of the company by his square, black, curling beard. I have often seen him; and one night a year ago, I asked him questions which he answered by showing me flowers and precious stones, of whose meaning I had no knowledge, and seemed too perfected a soul for any knowledge that cannot be spoken in symbol or metaphor.

Are he and his blue-robed companions, and their like, "the Eternal realities" of which we are the reflection "in the vegetable glass of nature," or a momentary dream? To answer is to take sides in the only controversy in

which it is greatly worth taking sides, and in the only controversy which may never be decided.

3. Mr. Horton, who is a disciple of "The Brotherhood of the New Life," which finds the way to God in waking dreams, has his waking dreams, but more detailed and vivid than mine; and copies them in his drawings as if they were models posed for him by some unearthly master. A disciple of perhaps the most mediæval movement in modern mysticism, he has delighted in picturing the streets of mediæval German towns, and the castles of mediæval romances; and, at moments, as in *All Thy waves are gone over me*, the images of a kind of humorous piety like that of the mediæval miracle-plays and moralities. Always interesting when he pictures the principal symbols of his faith, the woman of *Rosa Mystica* and *Ascending into Heaven*, who is the Divine womanhood, the man-at-arms of *St. George* and *Be Strong*, who is the Divine manhood, he is at his best in picturing the Magi, who are the wisdom of the world, uplifting their thuribles before the Christ, who is the union of the Divine manhood and the Divine womanhood. The rays of the halo, the great beams of the manger, the rich ornament of the thuribles and of the cloaks, make up a pattern where the homeliness come of his pity mixes with an elaborateness come of his adoration. Even the phantastic landscapes, the entangled chimneys against

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a white sky, the dark valley with its little points of light, the cloudy and fragile towns and churches, are part of the history of a soul ; for Mr. Horton tells me that he has made them spectral, to make himself feel all things but a waking dream ; and whenever spiritual purpose mixes with artistic purpose, and not to its injury, it gives it a new sincerity, a new simplicity. He tried at first to copy his models in colour, and with little mastery over colour when even great mastery would not have helped him, and very literally : but soon found that you could only represent a world where nothing is still for a moment, and where colours have odours and odours musical notes, by formal and conventional images, midway between the scenery and persons of common life, and the geometrical emblems on mediæval talismans. His images are still few, though they are becoming more plentiful, and will probably be always but few ; for he who is content to copy common life need never repeat an image, because his eyes show him always changing scenes, and none that cannot be copied ; but there must always be a certain monotony in the work of the Symbolist, who can only make symbols out of the things that he loves. Rossetti and Botticelli have put the same face into a number of pictures ; M. Maeterlinck has put a mysterious comer, and a lighthouse, and a well in a wood into several plays ; and Mr. Horton has repeated again and again the woman of *Rosa Mystica*, and the man-at-arms of *Be Strong* ; and has put the crooked way of *The*

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Path to the Moon, "the straight and narrow way" into *St. George*, and an old drawing in *The Savoy*; the abyss of *The Gap*, the abyss which is always under all things, into drawings that are not in this book; and the wave of *The Wave*, which is God's overshadowing love, into *All Thy waves are gone over me*.

These formal and conventional images were at first but parts of his waking dreams, taken away from the parts that could not be drawn; for he forgot, as Blake often forgot, that you should no more draw the things the mind has seen than the things the eyes have seen, without considering what your scheme of colour and line, or your shape and kind of paper can best say: but his later drawings, *Sancta Dei Genitrix* and *Ascending into Heaven* for instance, show that he is beginning to see his waking dreams over again in the magical mirror of his art. He is beginning, too, to draw more accurately, and will doubtless draw as accurately as the greater number of the more visionary Symbolists, who have never, from the days when visionary Symbolists carved formal and conventional images of stone in Assyria and Egypt, drawn as accurately as men who are interested in things and not in the meaning of things. His art is immature, but it is more interesting than the mature art of our magazines, for it is the reverie of a lonely and profound temperament.

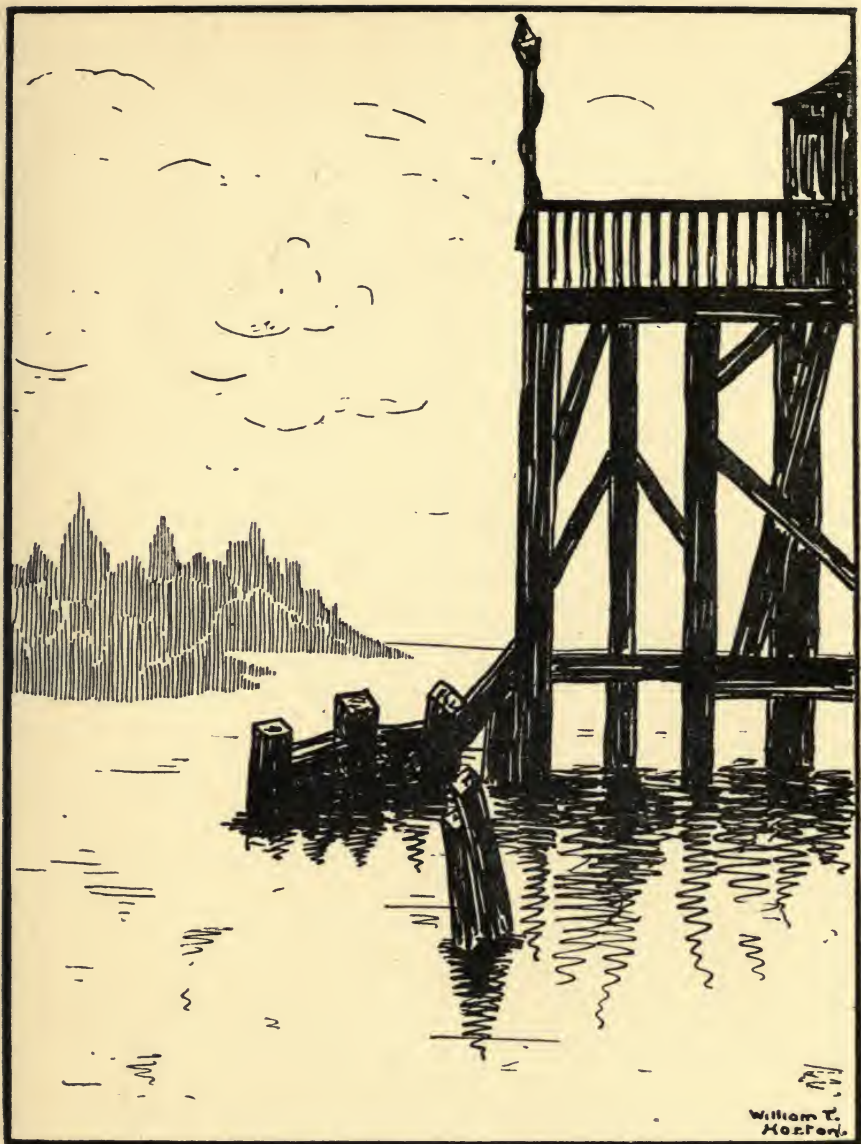
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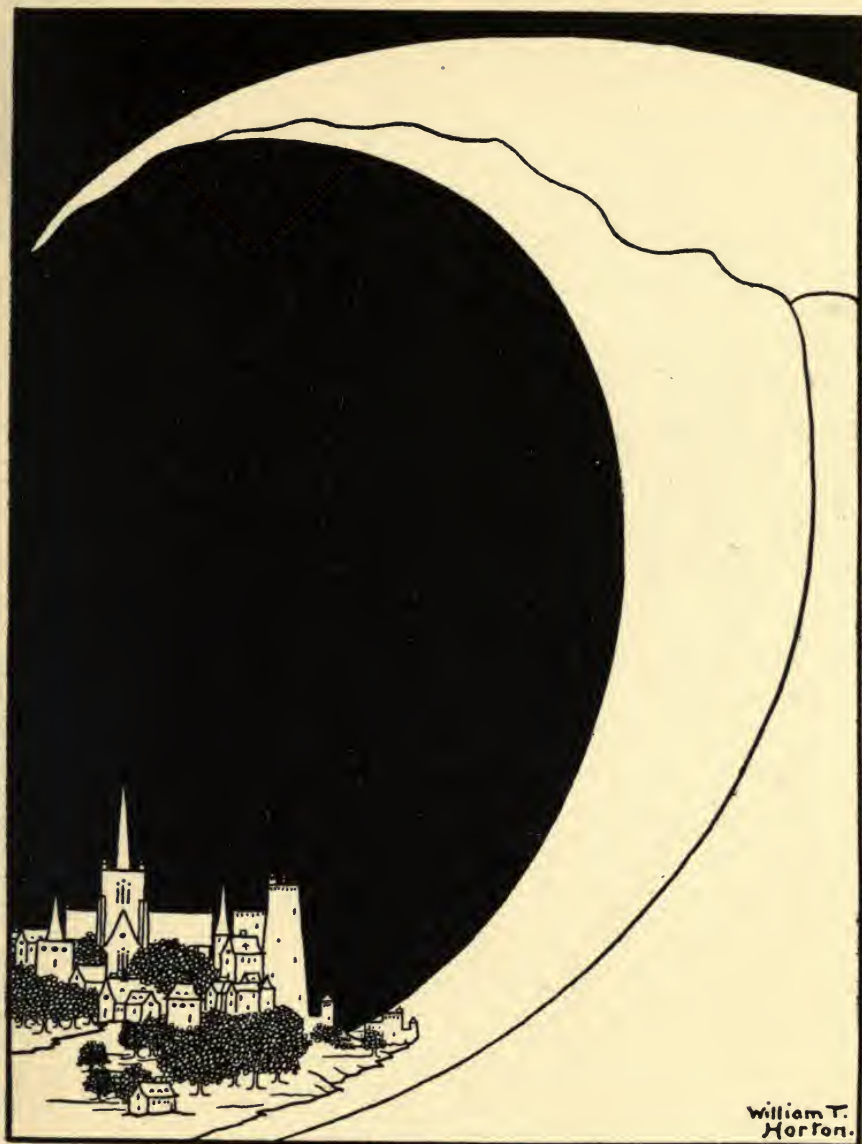
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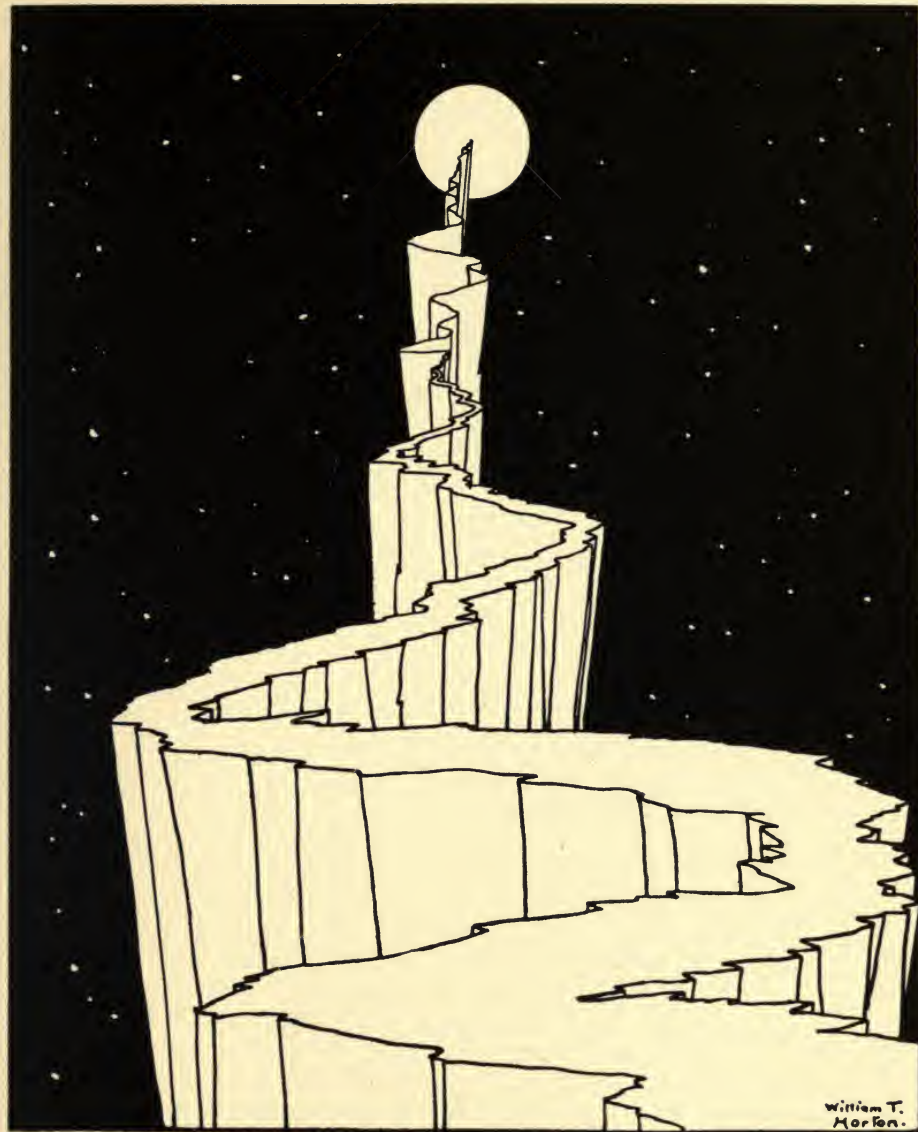




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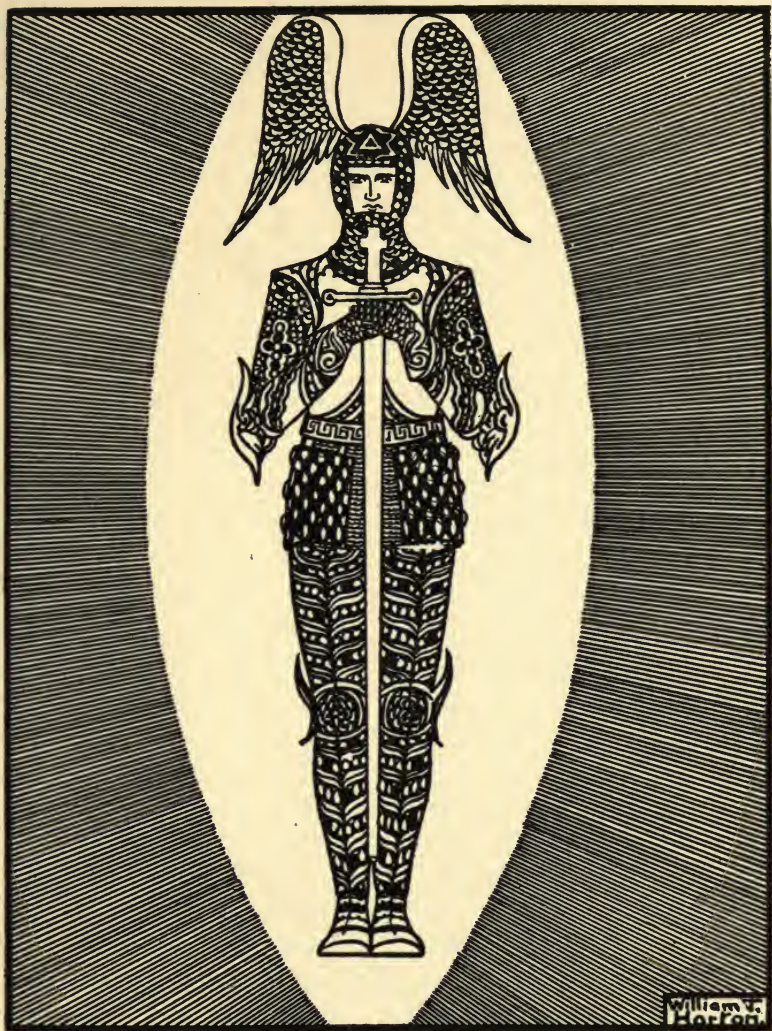












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